

Plan du cours

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Section 5 modal verbs

What are modal verbs?

Modal verbs are a group of auxiliaries: *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must* and *ought*. They are used **before other verbs**, and in **tags** and **short answers**.

'You *can* swim, *can't* you?' 'Yes, I *can*.'

'She *shouldn't* be late, *should* she?' 'No, she *shouldn't*.'

meanings

Modal verbs have **two** main kinds of meaning.

1. **Certainty:** we can use modal verbs to say for example that a situation is **certain, probable, possible or impossible**.

You *must* be tired. Emma *should* be home by now. We *might* go to Russia in June. It *can't* be true.

2. **Obligation and freedom:** we can use modal verbs for example to **tell** or **advise** people (not) to do things, and to talk about **freedom** or **ability** to do things. With these meanings they are important in the expression of **instructions, requests, suggestions** and **invitations**.

Students *must* register today. Can I go now? You *should* take a break.

Would you like to join us for a drink?

Modal verbs are not generally used to **report** situations and events, but simply to talk about their **probability, possibility** etc. So, for example, we say that something *could happen* in general, or that it *could not* happen, but to say that somebody actually did something on a particular occasion, we use a different verb (see page 60). Compare:

I *could* read when I was four. I *couldn't* read his handwriting.

I *managed to open* the tin with a screwdriver. (NOT ~~I could open the tin...~~)

tense

Note that *could, might, should* and *would* are not generally used as **past** forms of *can, may, shall* and *will* (though this can happen in indirect speech – see page 221). Mostly, they are used for **less definite** meanings. Compare:

Can I go now? (direct request) Could I go now? (less direct, more polite)

This Section covers most uses of modal verbs, but a few uses are dealt with in other Sections (see the Index for details). This section also includes information on *be able to, have (got) to, be supposed to, had better, used to* and *need (to)*, which are similar to modals in some ways.

'Rock journalism is people who can't write interviewing people who can't talk for people who can't read.'
(Frank Zappa)

'Go and see what that child is doing and tell her she *mustn't*.'
(Traditional)

'This is not a novel to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown with great force.'
(Dorothy Parker)

'The English may not like music, but they absolutely love the noise it makes.'
(Thomas Beecham)

'A cucumber should be well sliced and dressed with pepper and vinegar, and then thrown out, as good for nothing.'
(Samuel Johnson)

'There seems to be a natural instinct to imagine that where there is a wrong, there must be a right to balance it. Thus, if we condemn one act, we might feel inclined to praise another that constitutes a kind of counterweight in some global-historical moral scale. In reality there can often just be wrong as far as the eye can see.'
(Steven Poole)

'As we journey through life, discarding baggage along the way, we should keep an iron grip, to the very end, on the capacity for silliness. It preserves the soul from dessication.'
(Humphrey Lyttelton)

'Any fool can reinvent the wheel. The trick is to relabel it as a rotary transmission device.'
(Neil MacShaw)

modals: revise the basics

grammar The grammar of modal verbs is special in several ways:

- The third person singular present has **no -s**.
*It **must** be lunchtime.* (NOT ~~It musts~~ ...)
- Questions and negatives are made **without do**.
***Should** she?* (NOT ~~Does she should?~~) *It **cannot** be true.* (Note the spelling of cannot.)
- After modals (except *ought*) we use **infinitives without to**.
*I **can't** sing.* (NOT ~~I can't to sing.~~)
- Modals have **no infinitives or participles**. Instead we use forms of other expressions such as *be able to*, *have to* or *be allowed to*.
*I want **to be able to** travel.* (NOT ~~I want to can travel.~~)
*I've often **had to** lend my brother money.*
*She's always **been allowed to** do what she wanted.*
- Modals have a special **past** form made with a **perfect infinitive** (see pages 89–91).
*You **should have told** me.* *Lucy **must have missed** her train.*

1 CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE Five of sentences 1–10 are wrong. Correct the mistakes or write 'Correct'.

- ▶ I ~~shouldn't to have~~ much difficulty with this exercise. *...shouldn't have...*
- ▶ Must you go now? *Correct*
- 1 He's never had to work hard in his life.
- 2 I'm sorry to must tell you this.
- 3 We ought to phone William this evening.
- 4 Will you be able to find the place by yourself?
- 5 Does everybody must pay now?
- 6 They say it mights snow tomorrow.
- 7 Do you think the children might be allowed to go camping?
- 8 Would you like some more coffee?
- 9 I'm sorry, but I really oughtn't stay any longer.
- 10 Don't tell me I can't have a ticket – I must to have a ticket.

infinitives after modals Modals can be followed by all kinds of infinitive, including **perfect** (see above), **progressive** and **passive** (all without *to*).

*I **should be working**, not **playing** computer games.*
*The police **must be informed** as soon as possible.* *This door **must not be opened**.*

2 Put in the right kind of infinitives of the verbs in the box.

get mug open plan tidy up understand

- 1 'Incomprehensible' means 'cannot
- 2 'Where's Paul?' 'I think he may the garage.'
- 3 You shouldn't go out wearing that jewellery – you could
- 4 I'm afraid the management might to close some branches.
- 5 This door should not except in an emergency.
- 6 Shall I phone Emma? She must worried.

ability: can and could

past: could not always possible We use **could** for **general ability**, to say that somebody was able to do something at any time, whenever he/she wanted.

When I was younger I **could** run 10km in under 40 minutes.

But we do **not** normally use **could** to say that somebody did something **on one occasion**. Instead, we use other expressions.

I **managed to** run 10km yesterday in 55 minutes. (NOT ~~I could run 10 km yesterday ...~~)

How much steak **were** you **able to** buy? (NOT ~~How much steak could you buy?~~)

After three days' climbing they **succeeded in** getting to the top.

(NOT ~~After three days' climbing they could get to the top.~~)

I **found** a good pair of cheap jeans in the market. (NOT ~~I could find ...~~)

However, we can use **couldn't** to say that something **did not happen** on one occasion.

I looked everywhere, but I **couldn't** find my wallet.

1 Correct the mistakes using **managed to** or write 'Correct'.

- ▶ The town was crowded, but we ~~could find~~ a room in a small hotel. *managed to find*
- ▶ She could read when she was four. *Correct*
- 1 I could pass my driving test at the third try.
- 2 Where I grew up, everybody could ride a horse.
- 3 I could get some really good bargains in the sale yesterday.
- 4 We couldn't find seats on the train.
- 5 Believe it or not, I could sing beautifully when I was younger.
- 6 I worked really fast, and I could finish everything by 4.00.
- 7 We had a fire in the attic on Saturday, but the firemen could put it out.
- 8 I couldn't understand the instructions at all.
- 9 The door was locked, but I could get in through a window.
- 10 Four centuries ago, only a few people could read.

future: when can is possible We use **can** to talk about future actions which depend on **present** ability, circumstances, agreements, decisions etc. In other cases, we use **be able to**.

I **can** come in tomorrow evening if you like. (a present decision)

The doctor says I **will be able to** walk properly in three months.

(NOT ~~The doctor says I can walk properly in three months.~~)

2 Put in **can** or **can't** if possible; if not, use **will/won't be able to**.

- ▶ I *can* let you have a cheque tomorrow, if that's OK.
- ▶ I think I *will be able to* do some skiing next winter.
- 1 I've no time today. Let me see. I see her on Wednesday.
- 2 Do you think one day machines read our thoughts?
- 3 'The manager see you at eleven o'clock.' 'Thank you.'
- 4 There's no way people travel to Mars in my lifetime.
- 5 It's no use going to Canada – you get a residence permit.
- 6 'We need some superglue.' 'OK, I get some this afternoon.'
- 7 I'll take the car to the garage next week, but I don't think they fix the steering.
- 8 I'm sorry, but I come to your party – I'll be away.
- 9 We're not free today, but we manage a meeting next week.
- 10 'What are we going to eat?' 'Well, I do steak and chips.'

can see etc *Can* is often used with **see, hear, feel, taste, smell, understand** and **remember** to give a progressive kind of meaning.

I can see Susan coming down the road. (NOT *I'm seeing* ...)

Through the window, *I could hear* a man singing. *Can you smell* burning?

What's in the soup? *I can taste* something funny.

I (can) remember when there were no houses here.

Do/Can you understand why Alice left so suddenly?

3 Complete the sentences, using **can see etc**.

- 1 I definitely something burning. What do you think it is?
- 2 He opened his eyes, but to his horror he absolutely nothing.
- 3 I Susan practising the piano next door; it sounds nice.
- 4 This isn't my coffee – I distinctly sugar in it.
- 5 He thought he something crawling up his leg, but when he looked he anything.
- 6 I knew he had been with another woman. I her perfume.
- 7 There was somebody in the room. She them breathing.
- 8 I vaguely dreaming last night that we were all living on the moon.
- 9 When she talks fast I one word in three, maximum.



'I can see why they made February the shortest month of the year.'

NOTES

can with speak and play We use *I can speak/play* and *I speak/play* with very little difference.

I (can) speak Greek quite well. *Can/Does anybody here play* the piano?

typical behaviour Another use of *can/could* is to talk about what is **typical** (see page 67).

A female crocodile **can** lay 30–40 eggs. *It could* get very cold in our old house.

suggestions We can use both *can* and *could* to make **suggestions** about what to do. *Could* is 'softer', less definite than *can*.

'What shall we do at the weekend?' 'Well, we **can** go down to Brighton. And we **could** see if Harry wants to come – what do you think?'

Note the expression **can always**.

'I don't know what to give Olivia for her birthday.' 'You **can always** give her a gift token.'
(= '... if you can't think of anything better.')

criticism We can use **could** (often with a strong stress) to **criticise** people for not doing things.

You **COULD** wipe your feet when you come in! You **COULD** smile sometimes!

You **COULD** have phoned to say you were coming!

Might can be used in the same way (see page 67).

permission: *can*, *could*, *may* and *might*

asking for permission All four of these verbs can be used to **ask for permission**. *Can* is the least polite/formal; *could* is a little more polite/formal. These two are both used between people who know each other well, or when asking strangers for small things.

Can/Could I have some more tea? Excuse me – can/could I just get past?

Could is common in more formal situations, or when asking for more important things.

Could I stop work half an hour early? Could I take your car for the afternoon?

Adding *possibly* or *Do you think ...* makes a request even more polite.

Could I possibly take your car for the afternoon?

Do you think I could leave my bags here for half an hour?

May is similar to *could*, but less common. *Might* is extremely polite, and unusual.

May I use your phone? May I help you? Might I make a suggestion?

giving permission We give or refuse permission with *can* or *may*, not *could* or *might*.

'Could I start late tomorrow?' 'Of course you can.' (NOT *'Of course you could.'*)

Sorry, you can't have the car today – I need it. (NOT ... *you couldn't have the car...*)

You may stroke the horses, but you may not feed them.

1 CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE. Circle the best description.

- 1 Hi, John. **Might I possibly look** at your newspaper? *too polite / OK / not polite enough*
- 2 Excuse me, madam. **Can you watch** my luggage? *too polite / OK / not polite enough*
- 3 **Can I have** three tickets for tomorrow night? *too polite / OK / not polite enough*
- 4 **Could I borrow** your pen for a moment? *too polite / OK / not polite enough*
- 5 Hello, Mr Parker. **Can I use** your office to work in today? *too polite / OK / not polite enough*
- 6 'Dad, can I use your computer?' 'No, you **can't**.' *too polite / OK / not polite enough*
- 7 'May I use your phone?' 'Yes, **you might**.' *right / wrong*
- 8 Sorry, Louise. but I'm afraid **you couldn't go** out tonight. *right / wrong*
- 9 **You can get** a passport application form from a post office. *right / wrong*
- 10 **You may not make** personal phone calls from the office. *right / wrong*

asking about permission *May* is not normally used to **ask about permission** that **already exists** – about what is **normally allowed**, or about **rules and laws**. Compare:

May/Can I park here? Can you park here on Sundays? (NOT *May you park here on Sundays?*)

Can children go into pubs in Scotland? (NOT *May children go into pubs...*)

past permission: could not used We do not use *could* to say that somebody **was allowed** to do something **on one occasion**. Compare:

When I was a child I could watch TV whenever I wanted to. (not just one occasion)

Yesterday evening the children were allowed to stay up late to watch the football.

(NOT *Yesterday evening the children could stay up late...*)

2 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- 1 May people vote at age 17? ...
- 2 Can you download these books free, or do you have to pay? ...
- 3 I could do the exam late because I was ill. ...
- 4 At school, we could choose classics or science, but we couldn't mix them. ...
- 5 Everybody was allowed to go home early on Monday. ...
- 6 May anybody join this club? ...

obligation: *must* and *have (got) to*

similar meanings *Must* and *have (got) to* both express **necessity** and **obligation**.

I must apply for a visa this week. OR *I have to apply for a visa this week.*

Must you play that dreadful music? OR *Do you have to play that dreadful music?*

We must leave now. OR *We've got to leave now.*

a difference There is sometimes a small difference between *must* and *have (got) to*.

Must can be used especially to talk about the feelings and wishes of the **speaker/hearer**.

Have (got) to can be used especially for obligation from **somewhere else**. Compare:

I must get my hair cut: it's too long. *My wife says I've got to get my hair cut.*

You have to drive on the left in Britain. (MORE NATURAL THAN *You must drive ...*)

Must is common in regulations.

All drivers must have adequate insurance.

1 Read this with a dictionary; see how *must* reflects the hearer's wishes.

(In a dream, Mrs Ogmore-Pritchard is talking to her two dead husbands, Mr Ogmore and Mr Pritchard.)

MRS O-P: Tell me your tasks in order.

MR O: I must put my pyjamas in the drawer marked pyjamas.

MR P: I must take my cold bath which is good for me.

MR O: I must wear my flannel band to ward off sciatica.

MR P: I must dress behind the curtain and put on my apron.

MR O: I must blow my nose in a piece of tissue-paper which I afterwards burn.

MR P: I must take my salts which are nature's friend.

MR O: I must boil the drinking water because of germs.

MR P: I must make my herb tea which is free from tannin.

MR O: I must dust the blinds and then I must raise them.

MRS O-P: And before you let the sun in, mind it wipes its shoes.

Dylan Thomas: Under Milk Wood (adapted)

must not* and *do not have to are quite different. Compare:

In soccer, players ***must not*** touch the ball with their hands. (It's not allowed.)

In rugby, players can pick up the ball, but they ***do not have to***; they can also kick it.

2 Put in expressions from the box with *must (not)*, *have/has (got) to* or *don't have to*.

answer	come round	do military service ✓	find out	get	go to bed	go to work
hit your opponent	pay taxes	take off	throw out	turn down	vote	

- ▶ In some countries, both men and women *have (got) to do military service*.
- 1 I'm really tired. I
- 2 Sophie hasn't been in touch for days. I why.
- 3 You the questions if you don't want to.
- 4 In my country, everybody in elections.
- 5 You really that old coat. Please!
- 6 In boxing, you below the belt.
- 7 We haven't had a talk for ages. You really one evening.
- 8 You a licence to watch TV.
- 9 When you go through airport security you your coat.
- 10 Harry – you that music. We're all going deaf!
- 11 We all, one way or another.
- 12 Saturday tomorrow: I, thank goodness.

obligation: *should* and *ought to*

Should is used for suggestions, advice and opinions. It is less strong than *must*. Compare:

All drivers **must** have adequate insurance: it's the law.

You **should** insure your computer against accidental damage – it's sensible.

Orders and instructions can be made more polite by using *should* instead of *must*.

Applications **should** be sent before 30 June. Visitors **should** report to the office.

For other uses of *should*, see pages 225, 237 and 239.

Ought is similar to *should*, but less common. It is followed by *to*.

You **ought to** insure your computer. People **ought to** smile more.

1 Circle the best word or expression.

- 1 Do you think I *should* / *must* go and see Paul?
- 2 The house is on fire! Everybody *ought to* / *must* get out at once!
- 3 *Should* / *Must* we take the bus or get a taxi?
- 4 You *should* / *must* be 18 or over to vote in a general election.
- 5 I'm sorry, but you *ought to* / *must* wait in the queue like everybody else.
- 6 I think you *should* / *must* try to take a holiday.
- 7 We absolutely *should* / *must* clean up the kitchen – it's filthy.
- 8 Everybody *ought to* / *must* know more than one language.
- 9 They say you *should* / *must* eat five portions of fruit or vegetables a day.
- 10 People *should* / *must* take regular exercise.

2 Write a question asking for advice for yourself.

- *Should I go on studying or give up?* *What should I do this evening?*

3 Write a few sentences saying what you think other people should do: for example the government, parents, teachers, everybody.

Note: Question forms of *ought* are rather formal. In conversation people prefer, for example,

Do you think I ought to ...? or

Should we ...? (NOT USUALLY *Ought I / we to ...?*).



certainty: *must*, *can't*, *will*, *should*

must, can't We say that something **must** be true if we are certain, not from direct experience, but from deduction: from thinking about it logically. Compare:

She's at home: I saw her go in.

*She **must be** at home – her car's outside and the lights are on.*

The usual negative of *must*, with this meaning, is **cannot/can't**.

*She **can't be** at home: her car's gone and there are no lights on.*

should We use *should* (not) when we are not certain, but think that there are **good reasons** to think that something is true or not.

*He left an hour ago. He **should be** home by now.*

*'Who can I ask about the dates?' 'Try Jessica – she **should know**.'*

*I'm going to service the car myself – it **shouldn't be** too difficult.*

Ought to is possible with the same meaning.

*'Try Jessica – she **ought to know**.'*

1 Choose the best form.

- 1 If A is bigger than B, and B is bigger than C, then C *must / can't be* bigger than A.
- 2 Gemma *must / should* be able to translate this for you – she knows some Arabic.
- 3 'You've won first prize.' 'It *can't / shouldn't* be true!'
- 4 Look at their house. They *must / ought to* have plenty of money.
- 5 Look at those clouds. We *must / should* get some rain soon.
- 6 I'm going out for a bit. I *can't / shouldn't* be home too late.
- 7 That *must / can't* be her mother – they're more or less the same age.
- 8 'We're off to Turkey for a week.' 'That *must / should* be nice.'
- 9 Can I have a few words with you? It *should / shouldn't* take long.
- 10 That *mustn't / can't* be Daniel – he's in Morocco.

will We can use *will* and *will not / won't* with a similar meaning to *must/can't*. This is most common when we are certain of something because it's what is **expected**, or what is **normal/typical**.

'There's somebody coming up the stairs.' 'That'll be Mary.'

'Can you ring John?' 'Will he be there now?' 'Yes, he always starts work at 8.00.'

'Shall we go and have something to eat?' 'No, the canteen won't be open yet.'

2 Put in *will* or *won't*.

- 1 Chloe still be in the office: she's always the last to leave.
- 2 The chair isn't all that big. It fit in the car all right.
- 3 It's no use phoning Alan – he be at home now.
- 4 George saw William yesterday, so he know what's happening.
- 5 Jenny be out of hospital yet – her operation was only yesterday.
- 6 'There's a letter from you.' 'That be from the bank, I expect.'
- 7 As you know from my report, we are losing money heavily.
- 8 Jack had a very late night. He be feeling too good today, I imagine.
- 9 We'd better phone Helen. She be wondering where we've got to.
- 10 Excuse me. You remember me, but we met in Dublin last year.

probability and possibility: *may, might, can, could*

probability To talk about the **probability** that something is true, or will happen, we can use *may*.

Let's hurry – the shop *may* still be open.
We *may* go to Japan this summer. (= 'There's a chance that we'll go.')

Might and *could* express a **smaller probability**.
It *might/could* rain later, but I don't really think it will.

- 1 Write two things that you may do, or that may happen, in the future; and two things (a little less probable) that you might/could do or that might/could happen.
-
-
-
-

can not used *Can* is **not** normally used to talk about probability.
Andy *may* be in Joe's office. (BUT NOT ~~Andy can be in Joe's office.~~)

may not used in questions We **don't** use **question** forms of *may* with this meaning.
Do you think the firm *may* lose money? (NOT ~~May the firm lose money?~~)

- 2 Correct (✓) or not (X)?
- 1 'Where's Jessica?' 'She may be with Lewis.' ...
 - 2 'Where's Jessica?' 'She can be with Lewis.' ...
 - 3 'Where's Jessica?' 'She could be with Lewis.' ...
 - 4 'Where's Jessica?' 'She might be with Lewis.' ...
 - 5 May you be in London next week? ...
 - 6 Do you think you may be in London next week? ...
 - 7 I may start Chinese lessons in the autumn. ...
 - 8 I think it might rain. ...
 - 9 Tomorrow could be a really busy day. ...
 - 10 Tomorrow can be a really busy day. ...
 - 11 May there be an election next year, do you suppose? ...
 - 12 'Where's Sally?' 'Ask her secretary. He can know.' ...

may not and can't. Note the difference.
Isabelle *may not* be at home. (= 'Perhaps she's not at home.')

Isabelle *can't* be at home – she's in Spain this week. (= 'She's certainly not at home.')

- 3 Put in *may not* or *can't*.
- 1 Our team possibly win on Saturday – they haven't got a chance.
 - 2 I be here tomorrow. I'll let you know later.
 - 3 That child want more food. He's just had three plates of stew.
 - 4 There's a possibility of a strike, so the trains be running tomorrow.
 - 5 I'll ask her, but she want to see you.
 - 6 We be out of petrol. I filled the car up last night.
 - 7 'I never want to see you again.' 'You mean that.' 'Oh, yes I do.'
 - 8 We can try the restaurant round the corner, but they have a table free.

can for what is typical *Can* is not used to talk about probability (see page 66), but we can use *can* to talk about what is **typically** or normally **possible**.

A female crocodile **can** lay 30–40 eggs.

Silver birch trees **can** grow up to 30m tall.

A divorce **can** be a disastrous experience for children.

It **can** get very cold in our old house.

4 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- 1 Volcanic ash can damage aeroplane engines. ...
- 2 Ann can need some help – let's ask her. ...
- 3 The car's running badly. It can be time for a service. ...
- 4 Animals can take up a lot of your time. ...
- 5 You can get a lot of snow in the mountains in February. ...
- 6 'I can't find the sales report' 'Ask Maggie. She can know where it is.' ...
- 7 Good wine can be quite cheap if you know where to shop. ...
- 8 Some parrots can live for over 50 years. ...
- 9 Emma can be really bad-tempered at times. ...
- 10 The baby's coughing a lot. I think she can have a cold. ...

may ... but *May* (and sometimes *might*) can be used in arguing, to say that something is (not) true, **but** that this does not make a difference to the main point (see page 265).

He **may** know a lot, **but** he's got no common sense.

She **may** be good with children, **but** she's hell to live with.

He **may not** like teaching, **but** he's very good at it.

5 Rewrite these pairs of sentences with **may ... but**.

- ▶ I'm slow. I'm not stupid. ... *I may be slow, but I'm not stupid.*
- 1 She doesn't come to all the meetings. She knows what's going on.
.....
 - 2 You have a degree. That's no substitute for practical experience.
.....
 - 3 I don't know much about art. I know rubbish when I see it.
.....
 - 4 The government makes impressive promises. Nothing is going to change.
.....

NOTES

May well is often used to say that something is quite probable.

He'll certainly pass the exam, and he **may well** get a really good result.

May, might and could are possible with **if + present** (see page 232).

If he **carries** on like this, he **may/might/could** find himself in deep trouble.

May is **not** possible with **if + past**.

If I **had** more time, I **might/could** study Chinese. (NOT ~~If I had more time, I may...~~)

May you ...etc *May* can introduce **wishes**.

May you both be very happy together. **May** the best man win.

critical might We can use *might* (often STRESSED) to criticise people for not doing things.

You **MIGHT** close the door behind you! You **MIGHT** help with the washing up!

You **MIGHT** have remembered Pam's birthday!

Could can be used in the same way (see page 61).

may have gone, should have told etc

modal verbs with perfect infinitives are used mostly to talk about 'unreal' past situations – things which are the opposite of what happened, or which did not certainly happen.

*You **should have told** me earlier. She **may have gone** home.*

the opposite of what happened *Should have ... , ought to have ... , would have ... , could have ... and might have ...* can be used to talk about 'unreal' past situations that are the **opposite of what really happened**.

*You **should have been** here an hour ago. (But you weren't.)*

*Alice **oughtn't to have bought** that car. (But she did.)*

*I was so angry I **could have killed** her. (But I didn't.)*

*If I'd known you were coming, I **would have stayed** in.*

*Jumping out of the window like that – he **could/might have broken** his leg.*

We can use the structure to **criticise** people for not doing things.

*You **could have helped** me! (Why didn't you?)*

*You **might have let** me know you weren't coming – I stayed in all evening!*

1 Complete the sentences with *should have ... could have ... , might have ... or would have ...*

More than one answer may be possible.

- ▶ He should have paid me last week. (pay)
- 1 When he said that to me I him. (hit)
- 2 You somebody, driving like that. (kill)
- 3 I you, but I didn't have your number. (phone)
- 4 If my parents hadn't been so poor, I to university. (go)
- 5 It's his fault she left him; he nicer to her. (be)
- 6 I more garlic in the soup. (put)
- 7 If you needed money, you me. (ask)
- 8 'We got lost in the mountains.' 'You fools – you a map.' (take)
- 9 It's a good thing they got her to hospital in time. She (die)
- 10 You me you were bringing your friends to supper! (tell)

not certain *May have ... , could have ... and might have ...* can be used to talk about **possible** situations, when we are **not sure what (has) happened**.

*I **may have left** my keys here this morning. Have you seen them?*

*'Why isn't he here?' 'He **could have missed** the train, I suppose.'*

*They're not home. They **might have gone** away for the weekend.*

2 Rewrite the sentences using *may/could/might have ...*

- ▶ Perhaps she's got lost. She may have got lost. (OR She could/might have got lost.)
- 1 Perhaps Peter forgot to lock the door.
- 2 Perhaps your mother sent these flowers.
- 3 It's possible that the builders have finished.
- 4 There's a chance that I've found a new job.
- 5 It seems possible that Alex has changed her mind.
- 6 Somebody has been in my room, possibly.
- 7 Perhaps we've come to the wrong house.

Must/Can't have ... are used to talk about what we know or believe from **logical deduction**, from **reasoning about things** (see page 65).

*Julie's crying. Something bad **must have happened**.*
*Joe isn't here. He **can't have got** my message.*

3 Rewrite the sentences in italics using must/can't have ...

- 'We went to Dublin for the weekend.' 'I'm sure that was a nice change.'
That must have been a nice change.

- 1 'The car's got a big dent in the side.' 'It looks as if Bernie's had an accident.'
.....
- 2 There's nothing in the fridge. Obviously Luke hasn't been shopping.
.....
- 3 'Lucy isn't here.' 'I reminded her yesterday. Surely she hasn't forgotten.'
.....
- 4 'There's a lot of water around.' 'That means it rained in the night.'
.....
- 5 He had plenty of money last week. I don't believe he's spent it all.
.....
- 6 'I've finished the report.' 'Already? I guess you worked all weekend.'
.....

must have ... and had to ... Note the difference.

Joe must have gone home. (It seems certain that he has gone home.)
Joe had to go home. (It was necessary for him to go home.)

can't have ... and may not have ... Note the difference.

They can't have arrived yet. (They certainly haven't arrived.)
They may not have arrived yet. (Perhaps they haven't arrived.)

4 Put in must have ..., had to ..., can't have ... or may not have

- 1 Shakespeare to Australia, because Europeans didn't know about it. (go)
- 2 King Arthur – nobody's sure. (exist)
- 3 Castles in the Middle Ages cold in the winter. (be)
- 4 Poor people five hundred years ago easy lives. (have)
- 5 Sorry I'm late. I for a phone call. (wait)
- 6 She didn't answer. She what I said. (understand)
- 7 I two years' military service – a complete waste of time. (do)
- 8 You pleased when you heard you'd won the prize. (be)
- 9 'My ankle really hurts.' 'Well, you it if you can still walk.' (break)
- 10 I'm very sleepy. I at four this morning. (get up)



may have gone, should have told etc (continued)

needn't have ... Note the difference between **needn't have ...** and **didn't need to ...**

*I **needn't have** cooked so much food. Nobody was hungry. (I did it, but it was unnecessary.)*

*We had plenty of food left over from lunch, so I **didn't need to** cook. (It was unnecessary, so I didn't do it.)*

5 Choose the best way to complete the sentences.

- 1 We *needn't have hurried* / *didn't need to hurry* – we got there much too early.
- 2 I *needn't have watered* / *didn't need to water* the flowers: Emma had already done it.
- 3 We *needn't have bought* / *didn't need to buy* the encyclopaedia. The kids never open it.
- 4 We had enough petrol, so I *needn't have filled up* / *didn't need to fill up*.
- 5 Luckily we had plenty of food, so I *needn't have gone* / *didn't need to go* shopping.
- 6 I *needn't have studied* / *didn't need to study* Latin at school; it hasn't been any use to me.
- 7 I *needn't have bothered* / *didn't need to bother* to get her a birthday present. She didn't even thank me.
- 8 Where I grew up we *needn't have locked* / *didn't need to lock* our doors; there was no crime.

6 Choose the right modal verbs.

A DOG breeder has had five French bulldog pups stolen from her home. She believes she was being watched by thieves who knew the value of her dogs, which were stolen during a short period when she went out. She said "The dogs

may / might / must / should have been taken soon after I left because their food and water were still there. I *may / could / should / must* have sold the female pup for as much as £2,200, and the male dogs were worth around £1,500 each." ●

NOTES

Can have ... is unusual except in questions and negatives.

*What **can have happened** to Julia? She **can't have forgotten**.*

*I suppose she **may have missed** the train. (NOT ... ~~she can have missed the train~~.)*

Will have ... and should have ... are used to talk about what we can **reasonably expect** to have happened (see pages 36 and 65). **Will have ...** is **more certain** than **should have ...**

*Dear Sir, You **will** recently **have received** our new price list ...*

*Rebecca **should have arrived** home by now. Let's phone her.*

present or future meaning These structures can also be used to talk about unreal or uncertain situations in the present or future.

*I **should have been** on holiday this week, but they had a problem at work.*

*She **could have been** in the team for the next Olympics if she'd trained properly.*

*By the end of this year I **may have saved** enough money to go to America.*

may have: a change The normal use of **may have ...** is to say that things **possibly happened**: we are not certain.

*I'm not sure where she is. She **may have gone** out for a walk.*

But in modern English, some people use **may have ...** to talk about things that were possible but **did not happen**.

*You were stupid to try climbing up the cliff. You **may have killed** yourself.*

This meaning is more traditionally expressed with **might/could have ...**

*... You **might/could have killed** yourself.*

For **will have ...** (future perfect tense), see page 36. For **would have ...** with *if*, see page 239.

had better

Had better, like some modal verbs, is used to give **strong advice** to people (including ourselves). It is **not past** or **comparative**: it means 'This is a **good thing** to do **now**'.

You'd better tidy your room before your father gets home.
Six o'clock – I'd better put the chicken in the oven.

Had better is **not** used in **polite requests**. Compare:

Could you go out and buy something for supper? (NOT *You'd better go out ...*)
You'd better go now, or the shops will be closed.

We use **had better** for **immediate** advice, not to say what people should **usually** do.

You'd better get an eye test. (BUT NOT *People had better get eye tests regularly.*)

Compare *People should get eye tests regularly.*

1 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- ▶ It's getting late – we'd better think about going home. ✓
- ▶ You'd better let me use your phone. ✗
- 1 I'd better get my hair cut. ...
- 2 You'd better give me some more coffee. ...
- 3 Everybody had better give money to charity. ...
- 4 If you've got toothache again, you'd better see the dentist. ...
- 5 You'd better start working – the exam's next Tuesday. ...
- 6 We'd better hurry. The train leaves in ten minutes. ...
- 7 You'd better lend me some money. ...
- 8 It's getting late. I'd better get back home. ...

be supposed to

meanings We use **be supposed to** to talk about what is **expected**; what **should** happen.

You're supposed to have a licence to watch TV.
John was supposed to come at 6.00.

We can use the structure to talk about what is **believed**.

She's supposed to be a singer. *Is that supposed to be funny?*

1 Make sentences with **be supposed to**, using expressions from the box.

Different answers may be possible.

be efficient	be good communicators	be good with figures	forget things	go to mass on Sundays
have a lot of imagination	like children	make us laugh ✓	serve the people	

- ▶ Comedians *are supposed to make us laugh.*
- 1 Politicians
- 2 Teachers
- 3 Business people
- 4 Artists
- 5 Mathematicians
- 6 Linguists
- 7 Catholics
- 8 Old people

will and would: willingness; typical behaviour

We can use **will** to talk about **willingness** to do something.

*Will you come this way, please? What **will** you have to drink?*
*He'll do anything for money. She **won't** tell us anything.*

Would is less direct, and can be used to make a request more polite.

Would you come this way, please?

1 Rewrite these sentences using **will**, **won't** or **would**.

- ▶ Please wait here. *Will/Would you wait here?*
- 1 The car refuses to start.
- 2 Please take a seat.
- 3 Do you want tea or coffee?
- 4 Please tell me your name.
- 5 Nobody wants to tell us the truth.
- 6 I am ready to help you.
- 7 The computer refuses to recognise my password.
- 8 The bank is not willing to lend us any more money.
- 9 Please sign the form at the bottom.

habits We can use **will** to talk about **habits** and **typical behaviour**.

*The neighbours **will** always babysit if you have to go out.*
*He'll watch TV all day, but he **won't** spend five minutes doing housework.*

If we **stress will** it can sound **critical**.

*If you **WILL** eat so much, it's not surprising you feel ill.*

would **Would** is used in the same way, to talk about the past.

*On Sundays all the family **would** come to our place for lunch.*
*They were nice people, but they **WOULD** play loud music all night.*

2 Choose the best ways of completing these laws of nature, using **will** / **won't** with expressions from the box.

always move faster be enough get lost go off go wrong lose misunderstand it roll

- 1 If something can go wrong it
- 2 However much you do, it
- 3 The other queue
- 4 If you are in charge of a group of children, one
- 5 If you make something so clear that even an idiot will understand it, some idiot
- 6 If you drop a tool or small part while working on a car, it to the exact centre underneath the vehicle.
- 7 If you have to get up early for a very important reason, your alarm
- 8 If you watch your team during an important match, they

3 Think of somebody you know, and somebody you once knew. Write sentences about their typical behaviour, using **will** and **would**.

used to

forms *Used to* can have the forms of an ordinary verb (questions and negatives with *did*), or the forms of a modal verb. The forms with *did* are more common. The following infinitive always has **to**.

Did you use to smoke? Used you to smoke? (very uncommon)

We didn't use to go away on holiday. We used not to go away on holiday.

meaning The structure is used to talk about **past** situations and habits. There is **no present**.

I used to play tennis a lot. Now I play golf. (NOT Now I use to play golf.)

We always used to have dogs. Now we have a cat.

1 Write a few sentences about the way people used to live hundreds of years ago.

- *Most people used to live in the country. Children didn't use to go to school.*
-
-
-
-

2 Write a few sentences about things that you *used to do*, or *didn't use to do*, when you were younger. The words in the box may help.

believe go to like listen to play read think watch wear

-
-
-
-

3 Here are the answers to questions about somebody's schooldays. What do you think the questions might be? (There are different possibilities.)

- *'What languages did you use to study?'* 'Only French.'
- 1 'Rugby and tennis.'
- 2 'No, but I used to play the violin.'
- 3 'No, I used to do very badly.'
- 4 'No, I used to hate it.'
- 5 'Yes, we did.'

used to and would There is a difference. **Would** is only used to talk about **habits** – things that people **did repeatedly** – in particular time frames. Compare:

At weekends we used to / would go camping in the mountains.

I used to play the violin. BUT NOT I would play the violin. (no time-frame)

I used to have a Volkswagen. BUT NOT I would have a Volkswagen. (not a habit)

Note: Some people write *used* instead of *use* in questions and negatives: for example *Did you used to ...* and *I didn't used to* (There is no difference in pronunciation.) This is not considered correct.

need

forms *Need* can have the forms of an **ordinary verb** (questions and negatives with *do*, third-person -s, following infinitive with *to*).

Do we need to book? I think Alex needs to take a break.

However, **modal** auxiliary forms are also possible, especially in **questions** and **negatives**.

Need we book? Tell her she needn't come in tomorrow.

use Modal forms are most common when we are talking about things that are necessary at the time of speaking. Compare:

Need I send / Do I need to send in the application now?

When do people need to send in the application? (NOT ~~When need people send...~~)

Note the difference between **mustn't** and **needn't / don't need to**.

In bridge, you mustn't look at other people's cards. (It's not allowed.)

You needn't play for money, but you can if you like. (It's not necessary.)

1 CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE. Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- 1 Do we need to reserve a table for tonight? ...
- 2 Need we reserve a table for tonight? ...
- 3 Tell John he need reserve a table for tonight. ...
- 4 Pam needsn't work tomorrow. ...
- 5 Need I get a visa for my trip to Hungary? ...
- 6 Need people get a visa if they want to go to Hungary? ...
- 7 Just come when you like – you mustn't phone first. ...
- 8 Just come when you like – you don't need to phone first. ...
- 9 In a race, you mustn't start before the gun. ...
- 10 Do I need pay you now? ...

For *need* + perfect infinitive (e.g. *You needn't have bothered*), see page 70. For *need ...ing*, see page 95.

Note the structures *need hardly/scarcely/only* + infinitive without *to*.

I need hardly emphasise the importance of complete secrecy.

If you have any problems, you need only give me a ring.

'My grandfather took a bath every year, whether he needed to or not.'

(Harry Lewis)

'I seldom end up where I wanted to go, but almost always end up where I need to be.'

(Douglas Adams)

'What we think determines what happens to us, so if we want to change our lives, we need to stretch our minds.'

(Wayne Dyer)

'The Ten Commandments should be treated like an examination. Only six need to be attempted.'

(Bertrand Russell)

'If we really want liberty, then we need to go out and get it, we need to take it, because nobody is going to give it to us.'

(Michael Badnarik)

'Even very young children need to be informed about dying. Explain the concept of death very carefully to your child. This will make threatening him with it much more effective.'

(P. J. O'Rourke)

'It's often just enough to be with someone. I don't need to touch them. Not even talk. A feeling passes between you both. You're not alone.'

(Marilyn Monroe)

'You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait, be quiet, still and solitary.'

(Franz Kafka)

'All I really need to know... I learned in kindergarten.'

(Robert Fulghum)